Documentation Standards Working Group Interim Report, April 1996

At the ICOM meeting in Stavanger, the Data Model Working Group and the Data Terminology Working Group merged and became the Documentation Standards Working Group. Each of the former groups presented a product: the CIDOC Relational Data Model of the Data Model Working Group, and the International Guidelines for Museum Object Information of the Data Terminology Working Group.

   Project plans of the Working Group included mapping three data standards to the CIDOC Relational Data Model: Archaeological Sites, Ethnology, and Information Categories Guidelines. The working group plans also to conduct a workshop in Nairobi, details for which are not complete at this time.

   The Working Group held an interim meeting in Heraklion, Crete, Greece, March 6 - 8 to discuss object-oriented (O-O) methods and techniques for extending and enriching the CIDOC Relational Data Model. Following presentations, demonstrations, and much discussion, the group agreed to the following:

1. Future CIDOC data models will be developed using O-O methods, techniques, and formats. While this effort is under way, the current CIDOC Relational Data Model will be available, although it will not be modified or enhanced.

 The O-O model will retain all the related information contained in the existing relational model, and it will provide flexibility and extensibility not ossible for a relational approach. Information that is implicit in the relational model will be explicitly represented in the O-O model. Specifically, the O-O model can provide variable levels of information, from a general overview to precise detail, enabling the representation, use, and retrieval of information from multiple points of view simultaneously.

 The scope of the current relational model concentrates on the documentation of museum objects and their provenance. The O-O model will enable more specific collections management and research information to be included. Communication, interchange of information, and public access to museum information will be enhanced.

2. The group intends the O-O model to be a 'Conceptual Reference Model' (CRM), which can be enriched by complementary, domain-specific models. The CRM is seen as a key product which will provide the intellectual and conceptual framework for defining and integrating formal compatible subsets and extensions. The role of the group is to provide a forum for the consolidation, validation, and integration of these CRM components.

3. A first draft of the CRM will be created by a subgroup which will analyze the current relational model and convert it to an O-O format. The subgroup will report to the larger group on problems and exceptions encountered, identify the necessary transformation rules, and make recommendations for enhancing the CRM. This first version should be completed and distributed to working group members in time for the September CIDOC meeting in Nairobi.

   Future work involves testing and extending the CRM by applying it to specific applications, projects, and problem areas. This work will be entrusted to subgroups with specific interests and expertise who will report to the full working group.

4. To complement the O-O model, the group intends to provide support material to include presentation documents, guides, transformation rules, and other information needed to understand and use the new model. The O-O model

requires a different mind-set for looking at museum data: although it is more flexible and extensible, it also is more complex.